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CHALLENGES AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN NSUKKA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ENUGU STATE

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ABSTRACT

It is observed that many well-designed programmes of government meant for the upliftment of the educational system. One of such programmes in Nigeria is the Universal Basic Education (U.B.E) programme. This programme has been hampered by a number of implementation challenges. This study tried to identify these challenges faced by teachers while implementing the Universal Basic Education programme. Two research questions guided the study. Simple random sampling was used in drawing respondents. The questionnaire for the study was designed by the researchers. Data were analyzed using the mean. The findings of the study revealed the challenges that are faced by teachers in the implementation of Universal Basic Education. Finally, conclusions with some recommendations were made.

Keywords: Nigeria, Universal Basic Education, Universal Primary Education

INTRODUCTION

According to the Ancient Greek Philosopher Aristotle, “all men by nature desire to know” (Wikiquote). It is to satisfy this basic desire that man seeks for education. This is true since it is within the ambience of education that this basic desire of men to know is concretized. Not fulfilling this desire poses a devastating effect on human development which invariably cripples the society at large. No doubt, the desire to know has always been synchronous in Nigerian yet the means of making real this desire to know has been far-fetched. This explains the high level of illiteracy recorded among Nigerians in the past. Due to the implausibility of the means perhaps as a result of slave trade and the subsequent colonization, many Nigerians were not too keen to fulfilling this basic desire to know. Such laxity was the order of the day.

Nonetheless, this perceived laxity was not to last since the then colonial administration in a way, tried to administer education through the media of education ordinance and laws of 1882, 1887, 1926, 1948, 1952 and 1954 (Labo-Popoola, Bello and Atanda, 2009). In fact with the widely adoption of the 1954 constitution, the three regions (Eastern, Western and Northern) were able to promulgate the laws for their territories and citizens. As a result, many regional laws on education came to the limelight between 1954 and 1957. It is this situation that Labo-Popoola, Bello and Atanda (2009) regarded as the beginning of the introduction of universal education in Nigeria.

In 1955, education was first universalized in Nigeria by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Premier of Western region of Nigeria (Labo-Popoola, Bello and Atanda, 2009). Awolowo introduced free, universal and compulsory education, commonly referred then as Universal Primary Education (U.P.E). This, though a regional affair, sparked an educational revolution in Nigeria. The feat attained by the Western region in terms of U.P.E. led the Eastern region to

embark upon its own eight years freed education scheme (Labo-Popoola, Bello and Atanda, 2009) via its 1957 Universal Primary Education. The Northern region seemed to be left behind. This was as a result of the region's adoption of a critical and suspicious attitude towards the kind of education obtainable in the other regions (Labo-Popoola, Bello and Atanda, 2009). The region's education was an Islamic one, long received before the arrival of Christian education. Due to the region's conversance with Islamic education, it was not overtly bothered with universal primary education provided in other regions. Not just that, the fear of the conversion of their wards to Christianity contributed also. The negative reaction of the Northern region notwithstanding, it is instructive to note that all regions in Nigeria respectively tried to develop its own programme of promoting education among its citizens. It is pertinent to note, at this point that Obasanjo during his military regime, precisely in 1976, made the universalization of primary education a national project which hitherto was a regional project. Having been made a national project, the U.P.E. programme was redesigned by the government to provide education for Nigerians, thereby changing the content of U.P.E., making it to adopt the philosophy of developing the individual into a sound and effective citizens. Ever since then, the federal government has a right to equal educational opportunities regardless of any real or imagined disabilities (Labo-Popoola, Bello and Atanda, 2009). However, this U.P.E. programme was marred by poor planning and inadequate financing, and was abandoned mid-way despite its many promises.

Nevertheless, in 1999, with Obasanjo back as the president, a programme that looks much like U.P.E. programme came to the limelight. The programme this time was the Universal Basic Education (U.B.E). According to Labo-Popoola, Bello and Atanda (2009), "the programme was a policy reform measure of the federal government of Nigeria aimed at rectifying distortions in the basic education". Furthermore, Labo-Popoola, Bello and Atanda

(2009) noted that U.B.E. was conceived to embrace formal education upon to age 15, as well as adult and non-formal education including education of the marginalized groups within the Nigerian society. Not just that, the U.B.E programme made it compulsory that every government in Nigeria should provide free, compulsory and universal basic education for every child below junior secondary school age.

Despite the foregoing, implementing the new Universal Basic Education programme has been a tough nut to crack. A clear example of what is meant is that while the U.B.E. act was finally signed into law in 1999, it never took off until 2004, when the U.B.E. Act was finally signed into law. This was as a result of needless political bickering over what should be and not be in the Act that went on for five years. Also, the uncaring attitude of many states in the federation makes the implementation of the programme difficult. This goes on to show some challenges the implementation of the U.B.E. programme is facing. It is against this backdrop that this research was conducted with the view to identifying these challenges and finding strategies to resolving them.

Statement of the Problem

The Obasanjo led government in 1999 introduced the Universal Basic Education programme with the view to making education accessible and affordable for the citizens of Nigeria of school age. Nonetheless, it is the case that many Nigerians within the said age are still finding education inaccessible and unaffordable. This thus raises some questions: How sufficient is the U.B.E. programme in fulfilling the education demands of Nigerians? If sufficient, why has it not succeeded in its objectives? In answer to these questions, this study sought to identify the challenges encountered while implementing the U.B.E programme in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the challenges that hamper the effective implementation of the U.B.E. programme in Nigeria. With such insight, the study drives at providing strategies to be adopted so as to surmount these implementation challenges of the U.B.E. programme.

Research Questions

The following research question gave direction to the study:

1. What are the challenges faced in the implementation of Universal Basic Education (U.B.E)?
2. What are the strategies to adopt in order to bring about effective implementation of Universal Basic Education?

Policy and Programme

A policy is an organization's declared position on an issue while a programme is the mechanism or means to implement the policy. Though these terms may be synchronously used in this thesis, they remain different. Ejere (2011) succinctly indicated their difference when he remarked, "While a policy is a statement of action and intentions, a programme is the means designed to achieve the action and intentions. A programme is the set of strategies or activities meant to attain the intended objectives of particular policy.

Implementation

Literally, implementation means carrying out, accomplishing, fulfilling, producing or completing a given task (Paudel, 2009). Van Horn and Meter (1975) as seen in Ejere (2011) would note that implementation focuses on the processes and activities involved in the application, effectuation and administering of a policy. In short, “it is the action taken to carry out, accomplish and fulfill the intents, objectives and expected outcomes of public policies” (Horn and Meter in Ejere, 2011).

Universal Basic Education

As a term, it is a “nine (9) year basic programme, which was launched and executed by the government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development, political consciousness and national integration” (UBEC, 2013). Universal Basic Education was flagged off by former president Olusegun Obasanjo on 30th September, 1999 in Sokoto, Nigeria. The programme was Nigeria’s way of achieving Education for all (E.F.A) and the education-related Millennium Development Goals (M.D.G) UBEC, 2013).

Review of Empirical Studies

This first study to be reviewed in the selection was carried out by Labo-Popoola, Bello and Atanda (2009). The study examined the evaluation of universalization of education since 1955 and other attempts of various governments in Nigeria to provide basic education for its citizens in the context of the challenges facing the universal basic education scheme in particular. The study found out that inadequate funding, poor planning due to incomplete data, the inability of the scheme to reduce the rate of drop-outs, inadequate facilities in form of physical structures,

instruction materials and even quality teachers and corruption constituted challenges that militate against the objectives of the U.B.E. scheme. In view of these challenges, the study suggested intensive campaign among parents to enlighten them about the values of education; the putting in effect the relevant U.B.E. Act; the ensuring that funds are provided the basis of needs; and, the adequate training of teachers to man the schools under the U.B.E. programme.

Another study to be reviewed is one carried by Okonkwo and Obineli (2012). The study investigated the factors that must be faced in the effective implementation of Universal Basic Education and identified the roles of counsellors in that regard. To arrive at their findings, copies of questionnaires designed by the researchers were distributed to a non-random sampled population of 72 counsellors found during the C.A.S.S.O.N. meeting (Enugu State Chapter) of 24th February, 2011. The finding revealed that factors faced in the effective implementation of Universal Basic Education could be understood in terms of:

1. Data collection and analysis
2. Planning, monitoring, evaluation
3. Teachers, their recruitment, training and retraining and motivation
4. Enriched Curricular
5. Textbooks and instructional materials
6. Improved funding
7. Public enlightenment and social mobilization for full community involvement
8. Infrastructural facilities, especially in rural areas
9. Management of the entire process.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

The design adopted for this research is descriptive survey research design in which questionnaires were used to take the opinions of the respondents. According to Nworgu (2006), these are those studies which aim at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. These studies are only interested in describing certain variables in relation to the population. The design is considered suitable in carrying out the study because it will enable the researcher to collect and describe relevant data in surveying the various challenges faced while implementing the universal basic education programme.

Area of the Study

The study was carried out in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. Specifically, teachers of primary and secondary schools were used. The choice of the area is based on the researcher's familiarity and need to contribute his quota towards its development.

Population of the Study

The population for the study comprised of fifty (50) teachers from ten (10) primary and junior secondary schools in Nsukka local government area.

Sample and Sampling technique

Fifty (50) teachers were sampled for the study. The simple random sampling technique was used to draw respondents for the study. Five schools were randomly selected, from which the sampled teachers were drawn. For UBE or any educational programme or policy or

innovation to be translated into reality and success, it must reach the classroom, the heart of teaching. Teachers, in our present day reality hold the key, thus, they can either unlock the classroom door for the programme, if they are well disposed to and enthusiastic about it or slam the door against it, carrying on as if nothing has changed, no educational planner should underrate the teachers' factors in any programme before it takes off (Ijaiya, 1997).

Instrument for Data Collection

Questionnaire was used for the collection of necessary data and information for this study. The questionnaire was well-structured for the teachers by the researcher. The questionnaire has three sections, A, B and C. Section A reflects the concise description of the respondent. Section B reflects the first research question of this study, and section C reflects the second research question of this study. The questionnaire contained items that covered challenges faced while implementing the U.B.E programme and strategies to adopt for effective implementation of the U.B.E. programme. Section B consisted of ten (ten) items while section C consisted of nine (9) items. In the questionnaire, the respondents were required to state the degree of their agreement or disagreement on the item statements. The instrument was validated with experts and the reliability coefficients of 0.90, 0.84, 0.88 and 0.90 for clusters A,B,C,D and E respectively were determined. The overall coefficient value was 0.89.

Method of Data collection

Direct method delivery was used by the researcher with the help of two experienced research assistants. The on-the-spot collection ensured the complete return of the entire questionnaires used.

Method of Data Analysis

The statistical technique used by the researcher in analyzing the data is Mean. Items were analyzed by computing the mean responses of the respondents on each item. The weightings of the responses were: Strongly Agree = (4 points); Agree = (3 points); Disagree (2 points); and Strongly Disagree (1 point). The weightings were added to get the average for acceptable mean namely: $4+3+2+1 = 10/4 = 2.50$.

Decision Rule

The decision rule as stated is that items with mean scores above 2.50 will be taken as indications of acceptance while items with mean scores below 2.50 will be taken as indications of rejection.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Research question 1

What are the challenges faced in the implementation of Universal Basic Education Programme?

Fig. 1: Table One: for answering research question 1

| S/N | ITEM | SA | A | D | SD | NO | X | REMARK |
|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|------|----------|
| Implementing Challenges faced by U.B.E. | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Poor Planning | | 24 | 20 | 1 | 50 | 2.26 | Rejected |
| 2 | Problem of inaccurate data/statistics | | 20 | 20 | 10 | 50 | 2.2 | Rejected |
| 3 | Inadequate funding | 40 | 10 | | | 50 | 3.8 | Accepted |
| 4 | Unenabling and unconducive UBE programme environment of the country | 5 | 25 | 20 | | 50 | 2.7 | Accepted |
| 5 | Insufficient and dilapidated infrastructure, including ICT facilities | 25 | 25 | | | 50 | 3.5 | Accepted |
| 6 | Inadequate learning materials and equipments including ICT tools | 30 | 20 | | | 50 | 3.6 | Accepted |
| 7 | Paucity of qualified teachers | 20 | 30 | | | 50 | 3.6 | Accepted |
| 8 | Insufficient knowledge of UBE programme, its objectives and how to infuse ICT | | 25 | 20 | 5 | 50 | 2.4 | Rejected |
| 9 | Irregular payment of teachers' salaries | 40 | 10 | | | 50 | 3.8 | Accepted |
| 10 | Poor programmed supervision and management | 10 | 20 | 10 | 10 | 50 | 2.6 | Accepted |

Table One (1) show that Items, 1, 2, and 8 were not accepted because they scored below cut off point of 2.5, but others were accepted. This implies that only items 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10 are faced mainly by teachers.

Research Question 2

What are the strategies to adopt in order to ensure the effective implementation?

Table Two: For answering research question 2

| S/N | ITEM | SA | A | D | SD | NO | X | REMARK |
|-----|---|----|----|----|----|----|-----|----------|
| 1 | Training of teachers in right quality and quantity | 50 | | | | 50 | 4 | Accepted |
| 2 | Sustainable funding | 50 | | | | 50 | 4.0 | Accepted |
| 3 | Massive investment in schools' infrastructure improvement | 40 | 10 | | | 50 | 3.8 | Accepted |
| 4 | Efficient supervision and proper evaluation | 20 | 30 | | | 50 | 3.4 | Accepted |
| 5 | Capacity improvement of all UBE implementing agencies | | 30 | 20 | | 50 | 2.6 | Accepted |
| 6 | High supply of learning materials and equipment | 50 | | | | 50 | 4.0 | Accepted |
| 7 | Better teachers' welfare | 50 | | | | 50 | 4.0 | Accepted |
| 8 | Proper and adequate data/statistics | | 40 | 10 | | 50 | 2.8 | Accepted |
| 9 | Public enlightenment and social mobilization | 10 | 30 | 10 | | 50 | 3.0 | Accepted |

Table Two (2) shows that all items were accepted as strategies to adopt in ensuring effective implementation of Universal Basic Education Programme.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Discussion based on the findings of the study is organized under the following sub-headings:

- i. Challenges faced in the implementation of the U.B.E programme
- ii. Strategies to adopt in order to bring about effective implementation of U.B.E. programme.

Challenges Faced in the Implementation of the U.B.E. Programme

The findings based on the data on table 4.1 prove that out of the identified ten (10) challenges, teachers in the area of study agreed that they face mainly seven (7) of them. Not that the remaining three (3) are not there but their frequency is low. The finding concurs with Ejere (2011) who purported that since the introduction of U.B.E. programme in Nigeria in September, 1999 by the Obasanjo's administration, the programme is being bedeviled by a number of implementation problems. Little wonder, the study identified some major challenges facing the implementation of U.B.E. programme, which the teachers have lend credence to either partially or unmitigated.

Strategies to adopt in order to bring about the effective implementation of the U.B.E. Programme

In table 4.2, it was discovered that certain strategies that are or can be adopted and be employed to curb the menace of these discovered challenges as the teachers/implementers try to implement the U.B.E. programme. The finding is in concordance with the view of Ejere (2011) that for a programme to achieve the purpose it was designed, successful implementation is imperative. It is in the bid to bring about successful implementation that this study identified strategies that should be adopted, which the respondents unanimously agreed on.

Education Implication of the Study

A study such as this has several implications. U.B.E. programme was established to lay the foundation for life through inculcation of appropriate learning, self-awareness, citizenship and life skills. This cannot be realized on its own without the effort of the teachers/implementers. These efforts of the teacher/implementers are constrained by one challenge or the other as they

try to implement the U.B.E. programme. A study such as this therefore implies that these challenges that are there are unwanted and needed to be averted or resolved.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. There is the need to recruit and train teachers in right quantity and quality.
2. There is the need for sustainable funding
3. There is the need for massive investment in school's infrastructure improvement and the supply of learning materials and equipment.
4. There is the need for UBEC to step up in the area of supervision and evaluation of the U.B.E. programme.
5. There is the need for UBEC to keep proper and accurate data/statistics to know the extent the U.B.E/ programme has been implemented.
6. There is the need for the capacity improvement of UBEC. This commission in charge of the U.B.E. programme needs to be upgraded in terms to capacity and knowledge. This can be attained by taking the members of the commission to countries that have succeeded in the area of basic education, where they can learn and subsequently replicate in Nigeria.
7. There is the need to motivate the teachers who implement the U.B.E programme locally by ensuring a better welfare for them. This is paramount so as to avoid the U.B.E. programme being implemented haphazardly or nonchalantly.
8. There is the need to enlighten and mobilise the Nigeria public for full community movement.
9. There is need for ICT education for teachers.

SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Based on the findings and limitations of the study, the researcher therefore suggests that further research could be done in the following areas:

1. The study can be replicated using larger sample size in different Local Government Areas.
2. The perception of parents and children towards the actualization of the Universal Basic Education (U.B.E.) programme.
3. The Motivation of teachers for increased quantitative and qualitative results towards the successful implementation of the Universal Basic Education (U.B.E) programme.

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